death the realm fell upon evil days. The monarch was incompetent (although sometimes in an emergency he acted with decision and dignity), the court was torn by factions, taxes were oppressive, agricultural distress was frequent, misgovernment was rife, great landed estates were assigned to imperial favorites and the politically powerful, and brigandage and insurrections multiplied. Scholar-statesmen there were who strove to stern the tide—some protesting against the misrule of the eunuchs, several of them at the cost of their lives, and others organizing political groups or parties to effect reform. These efforts, however, were unavailing, and conditions went from bad to worse.

At this juncture, a new power arose in the Northeast, and by the middle of the seventeenth century it had conquered the Empire. The latest of those invasions from the north which have been so frequent and important a factor in China's history, it proved to be the most successful of them all: the Manchus governed the whole of China—something which no foreign conqueror except the Mongols had ever done—and held it for more than two and a half centuries, approximately three times as long as had the Mongols.

The Manchus were a Tungusic people, related to the Juchen, or Chin, who had been such prominent opponents of the Sung. At the dawn of the sixteenth century they were dwelling in the valley of the Sungari, in parts of the present provinces of Kirin and Heilungchiang. About the beginning of the seventeenth century they were welded into a powerful organization by one Nurhachu *(ca.* 1559-1626). By the time of his death Nurhachu had extended his frontiers to the sea on the east and to the Amur on

the north, and had moved his capital to Mukden, captured from the Ming. Under Nurhachu and his successor a large number of the Mongols were subdued and others voluntarily accepted the Manchu rule. The Manchus, too, obtained possession of the dynastic seal of the Yiian. Many Mongols were incorporated into the Manchu armies and acknowledged the house of Nurhachu as the imperial line of China. The name Ch'ing was assumed, the title by which the dynasty was to be known in Chinese history. The Manchus also launched repeated attacks against Korea and eventually succeeded in bringing it to acknowledge their suzerainty.